DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 685 PS 024 106

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TITLE Preventing Primary School Exclusion: What Can Education Service Based Initiatives Do?
PUB DATE 6 Oct 95
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at a conference, "The Prevention and Management of Exclusion from School" (York, England, United Kingdom, October 6, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Modification; *Behavior Problems; *Discipline Policy; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *Expulsion; Family Characteristics; Family Problems; Foreign Countries; Positive Reinforcement; Prevention; School Administration; Social Services; *Suspension
IDENTIFIERS Circle Time; Empirical Research; *Preventive Education; United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Drawing upon data collected during an investigation into the exclusion (suspension or expulsion) from school of primary age children due to behavioral problems, this paper provides an overview of findings from empirical research, but also considers the possibilities for prevention of primary school exclusion by using education service-based initiatives. The role of the education service-based initiative with respect to behavior management is considered at various levels: at national policy and LEA (Local Education Authority) levels, via GEST (Grants for Educational Support and Training) projects and behavior support teams; and at the level of schools, through whole-school behavior policies. Two contrasting school-based behavior management strategies are explored with reference to the fieldwork conducted during the research project, specifically, "assertive discipline" and "circle time," are discussed. Comments from teachers who had experience with implementing behavior policies using these strategies are included. The paper concludes with a brief consideration of the need for the support from other agencies, such as social services and health-based services, to help children establish more acceptable patterns of behavior. Contains 29 references. (MOK)

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Preventing Primary School Exclusion: what can education service based initiatives do ?

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ED 394 685

Paper presented at the Conference entitled: 'The Prevention and Management of Exclusion from School.' University of York, Friday 6th October, 1995.

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I would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the ESRC for this research. Grant number R000 23 4387.

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PS 024106

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summary

This paper will draw upon data collected during a recently completed investigation into the exclusion of primary age children from school. The project was funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) for a two year period and began in September 1993. This paper will provide a brief overview of some of the findings from the empirical research, but more importantly will consider the possibilities for prevention within the education service.

The role of the education service with respect to behaviour management is considered at various levels: at national policy and LEA levels, via GEST projects and behaviour support teams ; and at the level of schools, through whole school behaviour policies. Two contrasting school based behaviour management strategies are explored with reference to the fieldwork conducted during the research project. These strategies are 'Assertive Discipline' and 'Circle Time'. The paper concludes with a brief consideration of the need for the support from other agencies (social services and health based) to help children establish more rewarding patterns of behaviour.

Background

Children are excluded from school because some aspect(s) of their behaviour are viewed as 'unacceptable' by a school and specifically a headteacher. Thus in developing approaches within the education service these two sides of the same coin need to be examined; that is the behaviour of the child and the response of the school to it. The behaviour of children which causes concern in schools is referred to as 'bad' behaviour at times by government documents (eg DES/WO,1989; Circular 8/94, DfE,1994). 'Bad' behaviour implies a moral judgement and an absolute state in the child, yet it is well known that schools and indeed individual teachers differ in their capacity to tolerate amd manage behaviour (Rutter et al,1979; Galloway et al,1982). The paper will refer to such behaviours as either 'unacceptable' in relation to what a school and headteacher is willing and able to cope with, or 'inappropriate' in relation to the context in which it is presented.

Research about school exclusion may be viewed as relating closely to the numerous studies, commentaries and evidence about the school based behaviour of children and young people, which Galloway et al (1982), Lawrence et al (1984) and McManus (1989) trace throughout this century and before. The Elton report (DES/WO,1989) was in part a response to concerns from the teaching profession that the behaviour of schoolchildren was worsening (NAS/UWT,1985; PAT,1987; NUT,1988, referred to in DES/WO,1989). Elton also notes the long term nature of concerns about the school based behaviour of children and young people, concerns which are not confined to Britain alone. However, Elton also highlights the lack of comparative data for previous periods (p.65). The Elton report comments that, although Union surveys tend to provide evidence of strong agreement of growing indiscipline and difficult behaviour in schools, it may in part be due to the low and possibly unrepresentative responses. An NUT commissionsed National Opinion Poll survey found less agreement in an interview with a sample of 500 teachers; opinions were divided between just over a third (36%) of the teachers who thought that discipline was worse in their school than five years ago and a third (33%) who thought it was about the same or better. However, 7% of the sample reported having been threatened or physically attacked by a pupil or parent in the last year (DES/WO,1989,p.58). This perception of indiscipline amongst children in school (and indeed in society more generally) is arguably fueled by the media and the intermittent moral panics (after Cohen,1980) which can erupt after particular events. This is not to minimise the effect on teachers feeling that they are being prevented from doing their job properly, or the effects of sustaining an attack from a pupil or parent.

The Elton report emphasises that we have realistic aims about behaviour management:

Reducing bad behaviour is a realistic aim. Eliminating it completely is not. Historical and international comparisons help to illustrate this obvious but important point. Children have a need to discover where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour lie. It is natural for them to test these boundaries to confirm their location and, in some cases, for the excitement of challenge. The proper answer to such testing is to confirm the existence of the boundaries, and to do so firmly, unequivically and at once (p.65).

Exclusion from school, particularly a permanent exclusion, is the ultimate sanction for a school to use in relation to unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour. It is a sanction which has long been available and is enshrined in the Education Act 1944. What is worrying in the 1990s is the evidence that this ultimate sanction is being used more frequently. Specific to the concerns of this paper is the evidence about growing numbers of primary age children excluded from school. Primary age children have not been the focus for much of the research on exclusions (with the exception of Parsons et al, 1994 and Hayden, 1994) partly because they are a minority in comparison with their secondary school counterparts and partly because there is little evidence that they were excluded in such numbers in previous decades. In the early 1980s Galloway et al (1982) felt able to report that:-

Very few pupils are ever suspended from primary schools following disruptive behaviour. One obvious reason for this is that they can be transferred to a special school for maladjusted pupils before suspension becomes necessary (p.xiv).

Galloway et al (1982) make the immediate association between special education needs and the kind of behaviour which might occasion a primary school exclusion. This is an association which, as we shall see from the research evidence presented, has proved to be valid in many cases.

The Research: key findings

The empirical research which informs this paper involved three main stages: a national questionnaire which brought detailed returns from 46 (39%) Local Education Authorities (LEAs); fieldwork in 3 LEAs produced a database on 265 excluded primary age children, some more limited research in an additional 2 LEAs; as well as case studies of 38 individual children. This research is reported upon in more detail elsewhere (Hayden,1996; Hayden, forthcoming a &b). The research is based on official records of all types of primary school exclusion (fixed term, indefinate and permanent) during the 1992-93 academic year and the autumn term of 1993 for the national data and the 1993-94 academic year for the case studies. One of the key aims of this research was to inform preventative strategies for primary age children at risk of exclusion from school. A brief summary of some of the key findings from the three levels of the study follow.

Table 1: National trends in official records of permanent exclusion (autumn 1990-autumn 1994)

year	*all exclusions*	*primary only*
1990-91	2,910	378
1991-92	3,833	537
1992-93	**8,636**	**1,215**
1993-94	11,181(**11,013**)	1,297(**1,253**)
Autumn 1994	4,788	584

(Source: highlighted estimates are from the University of Portsmouth; 1990-91, 1991-92 figures are DfE (1992); 1993-94 and autumn 1994 are Parsons et al, 1995.)

The upward trend in records of permanent exclusion are clear. Although primary school exclusions are a minority, generally representing about 'one in eight' permanent exclusions, they represent a growing group of children who are often extremely problematic in terms of their future school placements. Whilst LEA data generally showed an increase in the rate of exclusion with age, permanent exclusion of primary age children was found to occur from the reception class upwards. Nine out of ten excluded children were boys. In the minority of LEAs (15 of the 46) where data could be supplied on ethnicity; African Caribbean and mixed race children were found to be over-represented, by up to three times and more than their proportion in local populations

Table 2: Reasons given by Headteachers for exclusion

reason	*% of cases citing reason*
physical aggression	53.6
verbal abuse	17.4
unacceptable beh.	18.9
disobedience	16.2
disruption	8.7
other	16.2
no reason*	2.2

(n=265 cases of exclusion; 27 permanent; 32 indefinate; 206 fixed term. These 265 cases accounted for 375 incidences of exclusion.) * ie no reason recorded on file

Physical aggression was a key reason given by headteachers for exclusion, although case studies generally revealed a range of other behaviours contributing to the difficulties experienced in schools. In particular running out of the classroom as well as absconding from the school site were common behaviours, which formed the background to instances of exclusion.

Table 3: Key aspects of the circumstances of excluded children

circumstance	*% of cases*
statemented at time of exclusion	26.8
in process of formal assessment	16.2
social services involved	35.5
1+ non-mainstream* agencies, involved with child/family	82.6

(n=265) * non-mainstream agencies are defined as agencies which only become involved with a child or family, if there is an acknowledged need or difficulty eg Education Welfare Departments, Social Services, Child and Family Guidance Clinics and health based psychiatric interventions.

Thus according to information on file in the three education departments, many of these children were already identified as having special educational needs, or were in the process of being assessed and many of the children and families were in receipt of interventions from a range of other services. This situation was even more apparent for the 65 children who had the serious (permanent and indefinate) types of exclusion, where 85% had been statemented, were in the process of formal assessment, or were in receipt of behaviour support. Statements were almost always for emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Over three-quaters (77%) of these children had either social services involvement with the family, were in receipt of child and family guidance, psychiatric services, or some other form of therapeutic and family based work.

Table 4: Common circumstances found in families in case studies

circumstance	*no.of cases*
family breakdown	33
evidence of SEN*	33
SSD involvement with family	25
multiple moves/disruption	23
evidence of violence/abuse	23
no member of household in paid work	23
time spent 'looked after'(SSD)	17
involvement with police/courts**	15
major accident/incident	11
disability or bereavement	11
substance misuse	9

(n=38) * SEN(special educational need), 18 statemented by time of interview, 9 in process of formal assessment, 6 receiving in-class support. ** Involvement with police, other than for marital disputes, violence and allegations of abuse.

Table 4 illustrates how the difficulties faced by excluded children and their families/carers were multi-faceted. Interviews with parents and carers demonstrated that the child's behaviour was often viewed as problematic out of school, as well as in school. It is clear that the needs of some excluded children go beyond what the education service can offer on its own. Some of the teachers interviewed during the course of the research felt that although they could probably 'contain' a particular child until the end of primary school, they did not feel they were really able to help the child. Similarly some mothers were fearful of their sons' aggression worsening as they

got older, although in one case it was the daughter's aggression towards her disabled mother, which was the cause for concern. Table 3 illustrates clearly how the child or family were already the subject of a range of other interventions in many cases. The children's behaviour was not just a school based issue, school was merely a situation which highlighted their unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour, because of the requirements for order and co-operation. Many of these children appeared 'distressed' rather than 'naughty' and in need of help not punishment. What the education service needs to do, and is doing in some schools, is to adopt structured approaches to behaviour management which may help some of these children learn acceptable forms of behaviour in school. Ideally complimentary work needs to be carried out with families. The structured approaches discussed later in this paper may then make it clear when a mainstream school can no longer continue to cater for a child's needs. In this situation the child's movement to another placement should be planned, rather than occur as the result of a crisis, which is sometimes the case now. In such a case a record of permanent exclusion should not be necessary.

Positive approaches

Positive approaches to address unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour in school are being developed on a number of levels, within the education service:

- ***nationally***, through enquiries and policy documents from the DfE (now DoEE), as well as through the funding of innovative projects (eg via GEST) to address identified aspects of behaviour problems;

- at ***LEA*** level in their interpretation of national policies and in the support and guidance they give schools eg through behaviour support services, INSET and the like, and within LEAs, where groups or clusters of schools work together on the issue;

- at ***School*** level many institutions are developing whole school behaviour policies.

This paper cannot hope to cover comprehensively all of the types of initiatives taking place. However, it will provide illustrations of the kinds of things which are going on at different levels within the education service.

National and LEA initiatives

The 'Pupils with Problems' documents, Circulars 8-13/94 (DfE,1994), which followed the implimentation of the 1993 Education Act, attempt to build on the findings of the Elton report. The Circular (8/94) which deals with pupil behaviour and discipline makes the following points:

Good behaviour and discipline are key foundations of good education. Without an orderly atmosphere effective teaching and learning cannot take place. If children are permitted to misbehave at school, or to absent themselves from it, they prejudice their own educational chances. Worse, they disrupt the education of the children around them.
(DfE Circular 8/94, p.6)

These may be obvious points to make and were greeted with some derision by schools at the time the documents were circulated. However, such documents do focus attention on the issue of behaviour in schools and in so doing may lead LEAs and schools to reconsider their strategies.

GEST (Grants for Education Support and Training) have produced a number of national

programmes on the theme of truancy and disaffection, which in some ways relate to the issue of exclusion as the quote below intimates. For example, the GEST 20 programme in describing the basis of the allocation of funds says:

Priority will be given to those LEAs where the problems of truancy and disaffection are most severe, judged inter alia by attendance rates and the number of excluded pupils (p.39) (my emphasis)

The underlying issue in all of these projects is pupil behaviour, disaffected pupils tend to behave in a way which is perceived as difficult to manage at best, or 'unacceptable' at worst. By adjusting or changing what is on offer in school, or how a situation is managed, it is often hoped that some affection for school might be created and thus more acceptable behaviour.
Attendance is perhaps more likely to be an issue with some primary school children at risk of exclusion, although as Barrett (1989) has argued disaffection does occur in the primary school. Exclusion from primary school is a relatively rare event, particularly the permanent variety, because of this some LEAs may not be sufficiently geared up to respond. Many of the GEST projects focus upon the secondary age group.

An 'inclusion' project
I will briefly refer to the findings from a GEST funded 'Inclusion' project which presents some of the key planning and service principles for LEAs trying to work to include pupils and thus reduce exclusion. The project operated during the 1994-95 academic year and had the following aim:

To reduce exclusions by identifying 'at risk of permanent exclusion' students and to work with students, parents and school staff to identify and develop creative strategies which enable 'at risk' students to continue attendance at school.

The project involved senior teachers from seven schools (5 secondary, 2 primary) who each identified one 'at risk' student from each school. Parent, child and teacher views of the situation were analysed and compiled by the project team, with a view to identifying appropriate responses and strategies to identified needs. The project identified a 'Menu of Possibilities' for schools to use, as follows:

Step 1 (little or no resource implication)

schools can:

-use an information gathering pack in order to plan effectively
-provide an 'exit' card/bolthole for particular at risk pupils
-arrange tracking by a trusted and supportive colleague
-provide staff support group
-make use of outreach from PRU
-make alternative arrangements for less structured times in the day
-arrange peer support
-set up home/school link/record
-involve EP and/or EWO in any of the above

Step 2 (greater resource implication)

schools can:

-provide different educational provision for some/all of the time
-calm, consistent teacher
-access to counselling
-social skills training group
-flexible arrangements
-parent involvement
-life skills/vocational curriculum (disapplication of National Curriculum for some?)

(Source: Fox,1995)

Not all schools will need reminding about all of these possibilities. However, such GEST projects can help develop and build upon existing good practice and enable other schools to take on such a 'Menu of Possibilities' for their more difficult pupils.

LEA- Behaviour Support

Education pyschologists (EPs) have the potential to offer support to schools on behaviour management, but it is a potential that is not always realised in practice. Primary schools may often get only two half days of EP time a term, to deal with their concerns. Schools in our study varied in their appreciation of the service as it now stands, but the common complaint was that the amount of time available made preventative and developmental work extremely difficult within the ordinary EP time allocation for a school. Such time tended to be used for reviews of children with statements, requests for observation and advice or formal assessment. There were limited opportunities for INSET (in-service training) in relation to behaviour management. Teachers often spoke of prioritising the list of children who they wanted to consult the education pyschologist about. Some teachers also reported that their education pyschologist was more useful in relation to learning difficulties, rather than behavioural difficulties (although this is a false distinction). Thus GEST funded projects and LEA run behaviour support services offered an important opportunity for additional support for behaviour management in schools and in such cases offered the potential of a preventative role for education pyschologists.

Some LEAs have established behaviour support services, two of the five LEAs in which we conducted fieldwork had LEA wide services in operation (or final stages planned). There were also a number of GEST projects in the other LEAs which focused upon pupil behaviour, but these were time limited by the very nature of their funding. Behaviour support services vary in organisation and style, according to their origins, funding and staffing. One of a number of possible behaviour support structures will now be described.

In one of the LEAs, all of the behaviour support was focused on primary schools. One of the three established teams was based with the Education Pyschology Service and took its referrals from this service. The Team consisted of two teachers of advisory status, two classroom assistants, a half time EP and some secretarial support. The original plan was to include a half time family worker, with funding from the social services department. Towards the end of the second year of operation of this service it had still not been possible to appoint this worker because of lack of funding. One of the advisory teachers said of this:

"As a team we feel strongly that we need the family worker....without him/her, it minimises the

impact of our work..."

Because there is no family worker it is up to the headteacher to inform and attempt to involve the family in the proposed programme. This is a process which some headteachers are not able to handle very well. In the worst scenario the following might happen:

(There is) *"..a formal meeting* (in the school) *with everybody sitting round and in comes, usually, a young single mum to meet all these people. To hear them berate the child and say how awful the child is and that's why all the people are here to help him...There's always this undertone of blame. Sometimes there's no way round it without a family worker. I often marvel at how cooperative families are in these circumstances."*

The spokesperson for this project and indeed for others visited, emphasised the importance of having a family worker with a different and distinct remit from that of the school, but who would provide the important link between home and school.

What might a behaviour support team do?

Behaviour support teams may work with individual children, groups or classes as well as whole schools. Some time limited projects investigated were attached to clusters of schools (ie a secondary school and the primary feeder schools). Whatever the remit such a team will provide the additional human resource needed in a busy classroom, but more importantly will pass on ideas and skills to improve behaviour management. Although the entry point to a school is often an individual creating a great deal of concern, a skilled behaviour support teacher will be able to identify other individuals who need help and support as well as whole school issues. As one behaviour support teacher said:

"For every single one of our acting out cases we have spotted an elective mute...Very soon we stop talking about that case and move on to that class and then to the whole school."

support teacher

The support teachers role in this team was of advisory status and had a wide ranging brief, which included work with the child referred, the teacher, other children in the class and indeed the whole school. Thus the support teachers role might include the following:

- ***individual***

occasional withdrawal of child for counselling and self esteem work;
organisation and maintenance of time out systems, reward systems and contracts;
liaison with parents/carers and other agencies providing support for the child;

- ***other children***

teaching social skills to groups of children (such as sharing, communicating, listening and working cooperatively);
teach whole class to enable classteacher to work with the referred child or groups which contain the referred child;
teach whole class PSE (Personal and Social Education) including work on self-esteem and 'Circle Time';

- ***class teacher***

the support of individual class teachers in class and out, to model appropriate behaviour and good working habits to enable the child to experience success;
discussion of classroom management and control;

- ***whole school***

development and production of appropriate literature relating to helping teachers and other professionals cope with behavioural problems;
advice on how to deploy ancillary help;
encouragement of 'good primary practice'.

support assistants

Some teams may also have support assistants to compliment the work of the behaviour support teacher. In one team investigated the support assistants went into schools for different sessions from the teachers and worked both with the individual child in the classroom and with the classroom assistant, where appropriate. In this way, like the support teacher, the support assistant contributed to in-service training for classroom assistants. A support assistant's role might include the following:

- befriending and developing a positive, meaningful relationship with the referred child, and modelling good behaviour and work habits for the child to experience success;
- carrying out structured observations of referred child or class;
- liaison with parents/guardians and other agencies providing support for the child;
- work with the classroom assistants to offer advice, support and guidance.

family worker

The role of a family worker on such a team is primarily to support the parents/carers of children with behaviour problems in school. Such a role might include the following activities:

- making an initial visit to the family to discuss the potential for support;
- liason with other support agencies regarding the provision of other help for the family;
- working directly with parents/carers to develop positive parenting skills;
- establishing positive parent support for all parents in a particular school.

educational pyschologist

The team EP has an overall planning, coordinating and monitoring role, as well as individual input where the skills and expertise of a psychologist are required. Such a role might include the following activities:

- receiving and considering the initial referral;
- coordinating the planning meetings to develop appropriate strategies and interventions;
- (where appropriate) making individual child assessments and reports;
- (where appropriate) providing individual counselling for a child;
- monitoring the overall effectiveness and evaluation of the team.

(Bryan and Simpson,1995)

Schools: behaviour management

It is at the level of the school that positive approaches have to make an impact and are likely to cover related issues of discipline, bullying, equal opportunities and special needs provision, as well as behaviour more generally within schools. At the level of the group, the focus is largely about strategies of classroom management of these issues, within the policy context agreed by the school. Some individuals will not be effectively managed within whole school or classroom strategies and will need individual education plans (IEPs), as required by the Code of Practice for special educational needs. In addition staff need advice and guidance on how to reduce conflict, prevent face to face violence and on how to deal with such events when they occur.

Whole school behaviour policies have been promoted in the 1990s so that the boundaries of acceptable behaviour are not left to the individual teacher to decide. According to Circular 8/94 such policies should be developed by the headteacher, classteachers and non-teaching staff in consultation with the school governors, with the governing body taking a clear lead in proposing principles and standards. Parents and pupils should be involved in discussion of the development of a policy, which should also be featured in the annual report to parents and in the school prospectus. The precise content of a school's behaviour policy is left up to the individual school to decide.

Although schools have always had rules and accompanying reward and punishment systems, not all schools have had behaviour policies. The Elton report (DES/WO,1989) suggested that schools which simply have a long list of prohibitions and no consistent behaviour policy were more likely to be troubled by bad behaviour than those which had harmonised all the features of the institution with regard to behaviour. The Elton report found that schools which relied on punishments as a deterrent to unwanted behaviour were likely to be disappointed. Both Rutter (1979) and Mortimore (1988) confirm these kind of findings.

whole school behaviour policies

Circular 8/94 'encourages' schools to develop whole-school behaviour policies and suggests the following characteristics of successful whole-school policies:

- the policy should be simple and straightforward, and based on a clear and defensible set of principles and values;
- the policy should provide for the punishment of bad behaviour and encourage good behaviour;
- the policy should be specific to the school and rules should be kept to the minimum necessary to ensure good behaviour;
- the reasons for each rule should be kept to the minimum necessary to ensure good behaviour;
- the reasons for each rule should be clear; and
- wherever possible rules should be expressed in positive, constructive terms, although it should be absolutely clear what pupils are not allowed to do (p.11).

Examples of contrasting behaviour management strategies

Changing the way an institution operates is a difficult task and for some schools this is aided by adopting a particular behaviour management strategy, such as 'Assertive Discipline' or the 'Circle Time' approach, both of which come with training packages which can fit into a schools INSET programme. There are a variety of other ideas and packages but these two approaches were most commonly referred to during our field research. They also provide a useful philosophical contrast in terms of thinking about behaviour management in the school setting. Assertive Discipline, as the name of the strategy implies, is very much about adults (ie teachers) taking a strong, consistent lead in their approach to setting the boundaries for acceptable and appropriate behaviour for children in school. Circle Time, in contrast, starts from a different philosophical viewpoint, in creating periods of time in which adults and children have more equal status, within a framework in which opportunities are made and encouragement given for all children to communicate, experience success and be rewarded.

Assertive Discipline (Canter and Canter,1992)

Assertive Discipline is an idea which was originally developed in the United States, with the first book on the matter published in 1976 (*Assertive Discipline: A Take-Charge Approach for Today's Educator*). An updated version of one of the key documents which outlines this approach (Canter & Canter, 1992) defines the assertive teacher as:

One who clearly and firmly communicates her expectations to her students, and is prepared to reinforce her words with appropriate actions. She responds to students in a manner that maximises her potential to get her own needs to teach met, but in no way violates the best interests of the students (p.14).

The overall aim of the above book is to provide a basis upon which to establish a well ordered classroom, which teachers can then adapt to their own personal style and the particualar needs of their students. It is suggested that other theories and approaches to managing school behaviour can be integrated into the Assertive Discipline approach (p.255). The book opens with the reminder that the teacher has the right to teach and that pupils (referred to as students) have the right to learn in a classroom free from disruptive behaviour and it pinpoints the pupils rights in the classroom as:

- the right to a teacher who will set firm and consistent limits;
- the right to a teacher who will provide them with consisitent positive encouragement to motivate them to behave;
- the right to know what behaviours they need to engage in that will enable them to succeed in the classroom;
- the right to a teacher who will take the time to teach them how to manage their own behaviour (p.13)

Canter emphasizes the belief that *'most children can behave when they want to do so'* (p.19). He acknowledges that some children with special educational needs and impoverished backgrounds (emotionally as well as materially) will find it more difficult to behave appropriately, but emphasizes that a major block to the success of such children is whether the teacher believes they can help them. Canter makes some important points about the training of teachers in relation to understanding behaviour and obtaining order and discipline in the classroom. He believes that some of the contemporary theories of child psychology, such as Freud, Skinner, Glasser and

Dreikurs have been brought into the classroom, but often in a distorted and misinterpreted way. As a result, in Canters view, there can be confusion amongst some teachers about how to approach problems of discipline and behaviour. Such confusion, Canter observes, is unlikely to lead to confidence in the teacher in relation to behaviour management. Furthermore this is likely to lead to inconsistencies between teachers, with allegiances to different philosophies and thus a feeling of unfairness and confusion in some pupils. Agreeing and setting clear, consistent behavioural expectations in a school are the basis of the Assertive Discipline approach.

Key aspects of the strategy

A classroom discipline plan is a key part of the whole approach, which consists of rules which children must follow at all times, positive recognition for pupils following the rules and consequences when pupils choose not to follow the rules. The word 'choose' is crucial here in that in the strategy the child is made aware through a reminder about the rules and the consequences of not following them, that they are chosing the consequences if they continue the behaviour.

Sample classroom discipline plans are offered, which can be amended and reworded according to the circumstances and age range of particular schools. Individual rewards and whole class rewards are suggested. Individuals may be offered stickers and merits, positive letters home and so on. Whole classes can work towards a whole class reward, such as a particular activity or trip out of school, for good behaviour. In the latter strategy peer pressure is made use of in order to attain the desired goal. Progress towards such a whole class reward might be recorded by marbles in a jar for every house point or other recognition a member of the class obtains. Canter makes the distinction between rewarding good behaviour and 'bribery'. A bribe is given to entice somebody to do something they would not normally do, perhaps because it is not enjoyable or not in the individuals best interest, furthermore a bribe is given in anticipation of a behaviour. A reward, on the other hand, is given as a result of a wanted behaviour and in recognition that it is in the individuals best interest.

Individualized behaviour plans.

Canter recognises that this framework will not work for some pupils. Such individuals are likely to need an individualized discipline plan, which specifies:

- the specific behaviours expected of the pupil;
- meaningful consequences to be imposed if the pupil does not choose to engage in the appropriate behaviour;
- meaningful positive recognition to be given when the pupil does behave appropriately (p.227).

Canter acknowledges that the natural inclination of teachers dealing with difficult students may be to 'come down hard' on them, but he views this as a short-sighted approach. At the most basic level, such children are likely to try and get the teachers attention one way or another, so that paying the child attention for appropriate, rather than inappropriate behaviour is a more positive way forward.

For the pupil where nothing seems to work, Canter advises a close look at what is happening to see whether there is a pattern. He suggests that perhaps positive behaviour is being ignored or the teacher may not be following through consistently with the original plan. He says;

Circle Time operates include:

- an incentives policy, arrived at by consensus;
- all members of staff (teaching and support) must agree with and act on the policy;
- all members of staff (teaching and support) should draw upon the same range of privileges and sanctions and must be seen by the children to uphold and support each other's decisions;
- all children must experience some success, through the establishment of a 'baseline' of incentives;
- parents should be informed of the incentives, so that they can congratulate their children too (p.27).

Children 'Beyond'

Like Canter, Mosley recognises that a particular whole school system or approach to behaviour management will not work for all children, she describes such children as 'beyond' normal incentives and sanctions and lunchtime policies. However, she cautions against too much haste in naming such children. She says that such children will be obvious once the Circle Time system has been fully established for some time. Mosley describes such children as:

...confused children, whose basic emotional and physical needs have not been or are not being met. Within many of them there is a level of inner chaos which results in an absence of any internal boundaries. Often home itself fails to provide any limits. Consequently, these children are unable to recognise any of the normal boundaries of behaviour proposed by school; they are too unhappy, angry or suffering from low self-esteem. Their only way to regain any feeling of personal power is to wind other children or adults up. Because of low self-esteem they do not believe they have the chance of being 'good', so don't even bother to try (p.38).

Mosley suggests that such children should be given 'Tiny, Attainable, Tickable Targets' (TATTS), which focus on particular aspects of their behaviour and rewards them for achieving their target. These 'TATTS' may form the basis for specific behaviour contracts.

Mosley reminds us of the withdrawn child, who is also 'beyond' but is not disruptive and so can be easily overlooked. Such children, she says, have given up asking for their needs to be met. Mosley suggests specific strategies to involve such children in Circle Time, without forcing the child to speak (eg whispering their contribution to a puppet, with the teacher then speaking for the child to the whole group). The involvement of external agencies, such as child and family guidance is suggested as needed for some of these children.

For children who do not make any significant improvement Mosley acknowledges the stark reality of 'containment', which should (in her view) involve the development of an Action Plan by all members of staff in a school. It is emphasised that the child's teacher and classmates need support so that they are not adversely affected by such a child. Thus other members of staff and classes will need to share in the responsibility for this containment, until a suitable placement can be found. In relation to such a child Mosley says:

Other members of staff can offer practical support to allow 'time out' for either the child or the teacher. Supervised, practical tasks can be given to the child, e.g. sticking stamps on the school

mail, helping the caretaker in simple jobs, or the child could spend some time working in another classroom. It is most important that the self-esteem of the teacher and other children is not drastically lowered by the child's behaviour (p.43).

Research evidence : comments from teachers

Whilst undertaking the 38 case studies a range of schools were visited across 3 of the LEAs, this included all through primary schools, infant, middle and junior schools, an EBD primary school and an all age EBD school, as well as a middle school with a special unit. In addition other schools were visited in these LEAs, with the specific remit of investigating whole school behaviour policies.

The majority of these schools were in the process of further developing behaviour policies, which were described in a range of ways, as codes of conduct, charters and so on. The most common packages mentioned were the Assertive Discipline and Circle Time approaches mentioned above, although most schools adapted and added to these ideas. The enthusiasm was noticeable amongst headteachers who had recently adopted one of these approaches. If an approach had been adopted wholeheartedly by staff they generally reported that it had an immediate impact in terms of improving staff morale and children's behaviour. However, some headteachers emphasized that there was a need to keep developing new ideas about tackling issues of behaviour and discipline, in order to keep the momentum going in a school:

"We have had various behaviour policies over the past few years...we have found nothing which is absolutely adequate....the last thing we did before what we are doing now...we adopted the Assertive Discipline code. It's been great for a short term strategy, but its not a whole school policy. It's OK as far as the classroom is concerned...it doesn't have so much influence at other times...say lunchtime. It was difficult to link it with lunchtimes. Also the effect of it...we found that it diminishes after a time...the value of it becomes less and less as time goes on."

This school had moved on to the ideas encompassed in 'Circle Time' at the time of interview, a sequence of events which we found in several schools in one of the LEAs. The school had also focused on the way the staff were relating to and supporting each other. A counsellor was being paid to come in and work with the staff group. Some headteachers were uncertain about the impact of 'Assertive Discipline' upon some children:

"Assertive Discipline...to be honest on bad days it can be negative and I worry about the children who keep on getting the de-merits..how hard can you go on the sanctions. The majority of kids love the praise...they're very worried if parents find out about misbehaviour, however some kids find it difficult to accept praise or criticism. It has to be fair..it has to be applied scrupulously fairly..it can be very positively seen by the class..we were surprised about the number of 'good little girls' who were getting more than two or three warnings a day. Mind you the fact that apparently good children do occasionally get told off may make the more difficult child feel that it is not just them. But...we cannot always treat all children scrupulously fairly. If we warned the difficult child for everything he would be not far off exclusion....We try to divert the child into another class when all the things are adding up.
Assertive Discipline may be liked because the teaching profession is very low and frustrated and is possibly looking around for something.....it offers a framework.."

Most schools were more enthusiastic about involving children in developing the rules or charter than their parents, one headteacher commenting on how the children were involved in developing a Charter about how they should behave, said:

"Children are very good at this, they know what they should do...it doesn't mean they always do it."

Some schools had schools councils which were used as a vehicle to help develop and agree policies. For example, in one of the London schools each of the classes had two representatives, who met with the headteacher and deputy for half an hour once a week on a Friday to report back and discuss issues which had arisen in their classes during the week.

Schools were divided about whether they wanted internal or outside support with behaviour. In one of the LEAs schools could expect to gain access to a behaviour support service for about two sessions a week for a term, in a school year. Members of this team would work with individuals, groups or whole classes. One headteacher said of this support:

"I think you need somebody from outside. Teachers often get too emotionally involved in the whole thing....People from the outside come in fresh. It never seems to quite work internally because everybody has got their own problems, everybody has got too much to do. When you've got somebody from outside coming in to help it can be wonderful.....some individuals (named an individual in the service) *are very,very high calibre."*

Another headteacher in the same LEA decided to appoint a half time teacher (a former deputy head of a special school) to support staff in a range of practical ways. She felt that sometimes the needs of some classteachers were too pressing to wait for their allocation of time with the behaviour support team, which could be one or two terms away:

"I've got some new teachers to the school for whom the challenges that these children present are very new to them and they'll find it an uphill struggle. With the best will in the world, it's a huge shock to the system to meet children who will challenge them when they don't have strategies because they haven't had the experience to develop them. So, I haven't got time to let them evolve those strategies. I need to get someone in there to say look, this will work.."

A concern for all schools was the behaviour of a very small minority of children, it was acknowledged by most of these teachers that some children did not know how to behave appropriately and in effect had to be taught to behave appropriately in school. The extent to which whole school behaviour policies can contribute to this social learning is debatable. As the summaries of the two contrasting schemes above indicate, there will be children who will not respond to these structures, or even the individual programmes constructed for them within mainstream education. In comparing the likely effectiveness of Assertive Discipline and Circle Time, a behaviour support teacher said:

"Asssertive Discipline will correct the 'naughty' children. But we try and wean our teachers away from it. Teachers need to teach positive behaviour, some kids don't know how to behave positively. Assertive Discipline does give structure in a school and consensus, it reaches most children. Circle Time can reach more children, probably up to 98%....."

What about the other children?

What underscores all of the debates about the behaviour of some children in school is the whole issue of the effect of their behaviour on other children. This issue was commonly cited in interviews with headteachers as justification for an exclusion. It is difficult to overemphasise the impact of a child 'beyond' on other children, although it is easier to argue why such children need to be with their peers. I will illustrate this debate with reference to one of the more extreme situations found during the field research. For example one behaviour support teacher described a child as a 'biter' who attacked other children. The child had been physically abused by his father

who was a drinker. Two other children in his class had begun wetting the bed since his arrival in the class, two others had become school refusers, the teacher said *'parents were queueing up wanting the child out of the school'*. Apparently the behaviour support team was able to reduce the child's biting and began to substitute this behaviour for more acceptable behaviour. The child particularly liked a little girl who was encouraged to tell him that she did not like his biting behaviour, but she would allow him to stroke her hair or the back of her hand. Is this fair? I asked. In response the teacher said:

"Other children are part of the healing process....they are coming from secure homes, where they are safe."

Even supposing that this generalisation applies to this little girl, it still needs to be considered whether other children have the right not to help other children with their behaviour. It is worth reflecting for a moment, whether we as adults would feel amenable to a formerly physically aggressive work colleague stroking our hands or hair, rather than hitting or biting us. On the other hand, if damaged children are not allowed to mix with well adjusted pupils, where are they to learn appropriate behaviours? As one primary headteacher said of the instances where she had been approached to take an excluded child whom other schools did not want to take:

"We know that if we won't take them, nobody else will....what's going to happen to them ?"

On the other hand this headteacher was also very concious of the delicate balance in many school, so that if they take on too many of the children other schools have excluded:

"That would destroy our delicate balance.....We only just have enough ordinary kids to balance the others."

However, this primary school had a school council, which used Circle Time as part of their strategy to establish an ordered and caring environment, the headteacher emphasized the capacity of other children to support others. This headteacher had instituted a system of 'Guardian Angels' who supported either the bullies or bullied children by intervening and helping to stop or divert behaviour, sometimes with the help of an adult. However, it was still acknowledged at this school that adults had to be seen to take action if a child became very aggressive. She described such an incident:

"A child suddenly attacked a lunchtime supervisor, causing a nasty injury. It shocked the other children. Other children had to see that he was punished. The child was involved in the decision, in fact the child's suggested punishment was a more severe and longer exclusion than we came up with. I think if it is negotiated (ie a fixed term exclusion), *I do think it is useful. I think the chidren need to know that there may come a time in their lives when their behaviour will no longer be tolerated and that behaviour must be removed from the playground, if the child is unwilling to change it."*

The behaviour policy of this school was clearly informed by both the Assertive Discipline and Circle Time approaches. A very important aspect of this school's policy is its relative simplicity and accessibility to children. Rules have been kept to the minimum and have been discussed and negotiated with the children. Time is set aside at the beginning of the school year to establish this framework and it is reinforced after every school holiday. Class rules are reinforced weekly at the beginning of Circle Time sessions, as well as via prominently displayed notices. Such policies can do a great deal to create a more caring, safe and predictable environment for children in school, but they will not prevent all exclusions. Yet they should provide a framework where fixed term

exclusions are reduced and the ultimate sanction of permanent exclusion is avoided. However, the power of whole school policies could be considerably enhanced with the backing of other services in the form of complimentary work with families.

Implications and conclusions

The education system can and does cope with the behaviour of the vast majority of children. It is doing so in a context of change, in what is agreed to be appropriate and acceptable behaviour for children in school and indeed in society more generally. It is a context in which the authority of school and teachers is not automatically respected and in a situation of family formation change and breakdown. One of the two most common factors for the children in the 38 exclusion case studies in this research, is relationship breakdown in the home. The second factor is the clear evidence that most of these children have special educational needs and specifically emotional and behavioural difficulties. The education service has a clear remit to cater for the special educational needs of these children, but their complex home circumstances are largely the remit of a range of other agencies. In the majority of cases investigated children were operating in situations of major (and often multiple) stress. Such a profile of the home circumstances of the excluded primary age child is very much in keeping with the perceptions of professionals working in the field with such children and their families. A very significant sized grouping are the children known to social services departments and particularly those who have spent time in the care of the local authority. These are children who have had very little consistency in their lives, whose birth parents were unwilling or unable to socialise them into appropriate and acceptable patterns of behaviour. In the rules offered and developed in behaviour policies in primary schools, we can offer such children some concern and consisitency, so that they and other children can feel safe, secure and respected when they are in school. Many of the families who were not known to social services were experiencing difficulties in establishing acceptable behaviour with their children at home and could not enforce consistent forms of discipline and control. These families too were in need of support with their parenting skills, both from their own and from the schools' point of view.

As both Young (1990) and Halsey (1993) have suggested the potential of primary schools to be the site from which to operate support systems for parents and carers is important and could improve the quality of childhood, which Young and Halsey (1995) believe is necessary. However this paper would argue that this requires the reallocation and reorganisation of existing support workers and resources. Primary schools, as Webb (1994), has so aptly illustrated are laboring under a 'deluge of directives' and are widely recognised to be under-resourced relative to secondary education. As has been outlined earlier in this paper, a family support worker is a different sort of person with a different role and professional training from a teacher, and rightly so. By expecting teachers to take on such roles it is not only an unrealistic additional burden, it is also insulting to other professionals trained and experienced in this sort of work. Schools and the education service can and do achieve a great deal with most children. They could achieve a great deal more if the resources and expertise of other agencies were harnessed, not only for the families and carers of the children 'beyond' but also for those who are near to that situation.

Many of the primary age children excluded from school need the support of a professional who is aware of both their home and school situation and is able to advocate with the relevant support agencies on behalf of that child. Education welfare officers (or education social workers as they are sometimes called) may be the most obvious professional group to take on this advocacy role. However, service level agreements focusing on school attendance, as well as reductions in staffing in many LEAs may make this difficult, for all but the most pressing cases.

Case studies in the research have illustrated that a range of levels of support are needed if certain children are to be kept in schools. It is clear that some schools do need help and support in developing their behaviour management and disciplinary systems. Some case studies did suggest that already difficult situations could escalate because of the way they were managed by adults, particularly cases which involved the physical restraint of children. Parents too could benefit from complimentary systems of behaviour management and discipline in the home. Schools as a mainstream service may have the potential for being both accessible and less stigmatising venues for work on parenting skills than other establishments (such as social services run family centres, child guidance clinics and psychiatric services). It is a potential which is utilised in some schools (see for example, Batmanghelidjh,1995) and some LEAs (see for example, Barnes,1995) have systemmatically planned for these sorts of provision on the school site. However, it is a possibility which is often threatened in a period of reductions in public expenditure. Thus resources are an issue in a range of ways. Resources are often the underlying issue as to whether a child can be 'contained' within a school and they certainly relate to whether the child gains access to more specialised help. Additional resources may be especially important for a child who is being reintegrated into mainstream schooling, after either a period in special education or out of school due to a permanent exclusion.

The need for integrated programmes to address the promotion of appropriate behaviour in young children, which reach out beyond the confines of the requirements of the classroom and the school is clear. Lloyd Bennett (1995) points to the relative infancy of parent behaviour management programmes, in comparison with the attention focused upon behaviour management in schools. He says that school based behaviour management programmes may well produce well ordered, task focused classrooms, but that children will not necessarily behave appropriately in other situations without the structure provided by these programmes. That is, school based programmes may be able to provide the external controls which will guide children into patterns of positive and appropriate behaviour in the classroom. Yet such programmes will not be able to provide sufficiently for some of the children from home environments where they have not been able to internalise positive, appropriate and socially acceptable behaviour. For many of the children in this study it was in the less structured part of the school day (breaks and lunchtimes) that they displayed behaviour which led to their exclusion from school. That is, without the expertise of the teacher and the structure of the classroom situation, the child could not behave appropriately with their peers.

There were also children who could not always be managed even within the classroom situation. In most cases the evidence suggests that these children were very distressed and in need of individual attention. It was a happy circumstance if an individual adult was available when they were needed by such a child during the school day. The number and calibre of adults available during the school day in a primary school is critical. Staff absence or a headteacher off site attending a course or meeting, can tip the balance to a situation where there is literally no additional adult available for a child. Depending on the level of difficulty or distress displayed by a child (and depending on the adults' interpretation of the situation) as well as the capacity of the class teacher (and others, including other children) to cope with it, a particular instance of 'unacceptable' behaviour might lead to an exclusion for that child.

Carroll (1995) in reporting upon social work responses to requests for help with young children, whom she refers to as 'persistently aggressive and defiant' (p.37) says:

It is widely recognised that children who have experienced abuse or other serious trauma need treatment to help them recover an equilibrium and enjoy the remainder of their childhoods. Locked in their own distress, they need help to unravel their feelings, to make sense of past experiences,

and to leave them behind (p.37).

It is clear that many of the children reported upon in this research need the kind of help to which Carroll (1995) refers. Yet Carroll (1995) believes that social workers are not sufficiently trained by their basic qualification to effectively help the children she refers to. She writes of her own feelings of alarm at working individually with some aggressive children:

Personally, I am quite small, and know that I cannot restrain a kicking, screaming, out-of-control ten-year old alone (p.40).

Carroll (1995) emphasizes the need to recognise these feelings and to make sure that other colleagues are within earshot and alerted to the possibility that they may be needed to assist with such a child. Carroll (1995) is referring to a one-to-one situation which has different norms and parameters. A moments reflection upon the reality of coping with such an individual in a school setting illustrates one of the reasons why these children may be excluded, when support is inapproprate or not available.

There is clearly a need for better inter-agency support and recognition of the realities of the variety of demands on a teacher (and children) in a classroom. In particular there is a need for the carers of children accommodated by the social services department to have a clear role in relation to supporting the education of children in their care. Such children were heavily represented in the case studies in this research and as many observers, such as Jackson (1987) have said, they are children who have a great need for the opportunities that education might offer. There is also a need for a clear recognition that a range of services and provisions are necessary for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, if permanent exclusion from school is to be avoided. This range of services should include in school classroom support, as well as individual counselling and therapy (see for example, Batmanghelidjh,1995); it may include internal exclusions on the school site (see for example, Dunn,1994); it may include part time and short term withdrawal to off site centres; it should include special unit and school provision, as well as residential therapeutic environments. A comment (made during an interview) by the mother of seven year old twin boys, who were statemented for EBD, makes an obvious but important point:

"...there should be something between being in or out.....there should be something on the Tuesday if they are thrown out on a Monday.."

It is difficult to disagree with such a comment, especially when young children are involved. Education service based initiatives should be able to reduce fixed term exclusions of primary age children. Better planning and support from other agencies involved with children at risk of permanent exclusion might help aid in their containment, until a suitable placement is found. Similar support and planning is necessary when such children are re-integrated into mainstream schools. In this way young children should be able to avoid the stigmatising record of a permanent exclusion from school.

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